3/21/72

Dear Mary,

I'm trying to reform my ways, trying to sleep a bit longer. The limited success gives me too little time to do any real work before I have to awaken Lil. While I was shaving something that has been on my mind since my hasty response to your recent letter came to mind again. So, this is off the top of the head on that, not intended as even inferred criticism of you, for it is not. I am, instead, intending a general addressing of a general situation that has come to pass, I'm certain in the eyes of other with me in the role of the wrong one.

It is, of course, right and proper that those who develop material have the right to reserve its literary use for themselves. This has been one of our oldest and more serious problems. Too many do not respect this right. It is therefore also right that when they pass it on they ask and be able to depend upon its being held in confidence.

I find selective use of this by some. Because I intend no personal attack I avoid names. I want you to know of a couple of unfortunate consequences of too-selective sharing of such "hot" stuff. And I begin by telling you that there is one of us to whom, on several occasions, I have offered confidential information only to be told that it could not be accepted on that basis, it having become impossible for that person to distinguish between what must be maintained in confidence and what need not be. The real reason, I was then and remain convinced, is the subconscious desire of that person not to know that which was uncongenial to a prejudice and a preconception. That person had taken a firm and fixed position and would consider nothing in contradiction to it.

One case was the faker Forman, of Wisconsin, and his elaborate"study" of the neck wound, all based upon the spurious "work" of Thompson, the most uninhibited of the plagiarizers, uncritically accepted by one of us who should have known better. This Forman's work was unknown to me until Al Oser showed it to me in N.O., and I was aghast that they accepted it as gospel. The pictures were and are impressive in their limited legitimate application, but as I recall it, none of the rest is dependable and none survived my hasty examination. However, by that time, Sud, who also eschews the real work and has the most limited factual knowledge, had already used it in his brief in Judge Halleck's court in Washington. By the time I could tell him it was too late and he was hung on Forman. If you haven't read the transcript, take it from me he was a disaster in court. That case, historically, remains an important thing for us. I was able to save it by giving my own work away. But Forman was an arrogant animated disaster. This one case ought suffice to make my point. There are others if you want them.

Now with regard to Lattimer, to the best of my knowledge I am the only one to have undertaken to counter him in the only way that can't hurt us. This is part of the Cyril intent to apply. which preceeded my visit with you. I think I then discussed with you part of my reasons for deep apprehension over this, and it was not for anyone, like my being devoted the the Kennedys, which is not the case, but for our own interest in truth as a reality not some spurious concept of purism. It is no longer, in my view, a boon to say the Warren Report is not true. I know no serious-minded person who believes otherwise today. At the time I expressed my apprehension, which is perhaps a year after I developed it, I wrote a number of critics and spoke to others, in almost all cases asking people to think this thing through, to see if they could find danger in it for us, find the obfuscating rather than the developing of truth. To this day, with the exception of young Howard, who began opposing me then thought it through and came around to my point of view, not one has. With Lesar, it was face to face, and I could ask him questions for him to answer, so I was not doing what I think it important to avoid, imposing my view on him. I think all of this is too important for persuasion. We must all do independent thinking. None of us has a monopoly on truth or error.

Not only did I get no dialogue going with a young but worse, those who knew I was working

in opposition to what I knew was pending and after Lattimer raised his Medusa's head, no single critic sent me anything from files on him. We all had files on him. One had a particularly valuable file of correspondence, for in it he had disclosed of himself what he did not in his correspondence with me.

Now it happens that I was in correspondence and in other touch with a number of people. The ultimate effect has yet to be established, but I know this: things would have been a hell of a lot worse had it not been for my efforts. Whether it can or will continue indefinitely I have no way of knowing, but the second evil that was in the works has not yet come to pass. More importantly, I was writing to those of influence, those who could have done something, and I was thus not able to communicate this information about Lattimer. This was not then important for my writing, but it was important for other things, like preventing more harm, and I was first of all, too long delayed in getting it (and then got it only by accident) and what I regard as more dubiouss, not sent it by the one who had it to make what I was doing more difficult if not impossible.. And this ina person decision of what is right and wrong, not after discussion and consideration, not after thought aboutwhat it happened I alone knew, but on a person, Godly decision of omniscience.

We will have to await the ultimate unravelling of time. I know of other things pending. They will not, no matter what form they take, uncover what we do not know. They have the potential for hurting us. I am also aware of the gradual forming of what to me is a strange alliance. I am doing nothing about it and intend doing nothing. I am having to do less and less about preventing the stupidities of others, for I could spend all my time that way and still accomplish nothing. I have wasted too much time that way in the past. If I still do some, it is ever decreasing.

So, what I am telling you is that with a little thought I have reached my own conclusions about your source and the purpose of swearing you to secrecy you must respect. If it is from a recognized critic, I think on your end, when I am the only one of us to have done the work in that area that I have done, you might be asking yourself what legitimate end is served by not sharing that knowledge with me. And this is quite separate from how it was developed.

Understand, I am not asking for it. Especially under the circumstances do I not want it. Nor am I suggesting any criticism of you for preserving that confidence. I am addressing other things I hope are clear enough, our general situation, its potential, and how this fierce, irrational competitiveness, often jealousy, whether or not so recognized, cripples all of us. I am reminded of Sylvia's refusal to hear in confidence what I could tell her of Thornley on the ground that she could no longer remember what had to be kept in confidence, he giving him money to defend himself against Garrison, and her quite accurate response to me when I complained that rather than use it in his defense, he was using it as a means of attacking me within the ciritical community. This is the fact. It did much harm and took much time, esp. because Lifton still had him in tow and was doing his dirty work. She said how she spends her money is her affair. That is absolutely true. But when we spend money intending it for good purposes and finding it used for harmful end, we ~~ad~~ introduce moral and ethical questions that also ought be faced. I don't think it is purism or truth or the quest for truth to assume that if Garrison says yes the answer or the reality is no. I don't think this is the most rudimentary use of the mind. Thornley is good or bad, right or wrong, quite separately from whatever one may or may not think of Garrison.

It is time to get on with the day. Bill is up. breakfast is almost ready, and there are other things to do. My apologies if the typing is worse than usual. I wound an IBM ribbon on the spools of thinkermen, for which it was never intended. It is a bit broad and stiff, so it hangs and when I do look to see if I have made an error, the hanging ribbon blocks it. When you are in touch with Buck, give him my best...I Guess there lingers in me an unrecognized unhappiness about the attitude reflected by Arch, who also has every right to spend or not spend his money as he sees fit. But I don't think it will do any of us or our work any good. You need not engaged in a dialogue on this, unless you want to. My purpose is not to take you time when you have so many problems. Best regards,